

CITY ENGINEER JOHN ERICSON ACCUSED OF DOUBLE-CROSSING CITY AT HOT SESSION

The Commonwealth Edison Company's hand in politics was mentioned before the city council finance committee yesterday. John Ericson, chief city engineer, was asked whether he is on the payroll of other corporations than the city of Chicago. Alds. Harding, Merriam, Long and Richert shot pointed questions at Ericson and the resolution adopted by the committee classes Ericson as double-crossing the city.

Ericson was called before the committee to explain why, as a member of the Cooley commission appointed by the sanitary district board, he signed a report which knocks the publicly-owned lighting plant of the district and advises shoving up the city's light cost \$120,000 a year.

"Whom do you think you represented—the Commonwealth Edison Co., the city of Chicago or the sanitary district?" Ald. Harding asked.

"I represented nobody but myself as an engineer," said Ericson.

"Do you understand that the report you signed will be used to discredit the largest public electric light plant in the United States?" put in Merriam.

"I don't know."

"Don't you know that the Commonwealth Edison Co., the hydro-electric trust and all opponents of public ownership welcome this report?"

"Perhaps that's true, but we had to state the facts."

Ericson explained that he took a place on the Cooley commission with the approval of Public Works Commissioner McGann.

Ald. Long wanted to know how a man in Ericson's place can ride two horses going in two different directions at the same time. He asked:

"Do you think your attitude was ethically consistent with your position as chief engineer of the city?"

"I don't see how I could make a dif-

ferent report with the facts I had before me."

Under pressure Ericson then admitted he had not gone out and got hold of the facts for himself about the Lockport plant. He signed the report on the basis of "facts collected by employes of Lyman E. Cooley, the sanitary district chief engineer."

"You based your conclusions on data supplied you by other persons?" Ald. Lipps queried.

"Yes, absolutely," said the chief engineer.

The whole question of city officials working for the city and for outside interests at the same time will come before the city council when the resolution adopted yesterday is brought in. The resolution passed unanimously "repudiates the report (of the Cooley commission) and the unauthorized action of city officials in making the same."

City Electrician Ray Palmer signed a report of last year knocking the Lockport plant. He stands in about the same position as Ericson. Wm. D. Barber, an assistant city engineer, was discharged this year for the sole and only reason that he wrote an article printed in an engineering magazine criticizing the city's water plant. These things will be brought out in council meeting next Monday night.

The Lockport plant is owned by the people through the sanitary district board, whose trustees are elected by the voters of the district. The plant is worth about \$5,000,000, according to the figures of minority trustees. At this valuation the district is making money and running a good business. The Cooley commission, backed by a majority of the sanitary district trustees, values the plant above \$6,000,000. On this valuation, the commission claims, the rates must be shoved higher in order to